

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Annual Philanthropy Retreat Begins Thursday; STX Foundation to Unveil 'Theory of Change' to National and Regional Philanthropy Execs

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The St. Croix Foundation building in downtown Christiansted, ( 1023 Market St.) St. Croix. By. ST. CROIX FOUNDATION

Beginning this Thursday, the St. Croix Foundation will host local nonprofit partners and foundation guests during its 5th Annual Philanthropy Retreat.

It is an opportunity for the foundation to advocate for greater equity and inclusion of St. Croix when it comes to the disbursement of much-needed donor funding for marginalized groups within the territory.

Senior executives from national and regional foundations will attend the three-day event from February 16-18th. The invitation-only retreat connects national and regional senior philanthropy executives with the board and staff of the foundation's nonprofit collective, a coalition of approximately 30 St. Croix nonprofit groups.

"From our inception, St. Croix Foundation has been committed to honing competency around deep civic discourse and the disruption of old outdated paradigms that no longer serve the people and the places in which we invest," said Deanna James, president of the foundation. "Over the course of our upcoming 3-day convening, we are excited to unveil our new theory of change for the field of philanthropy that we believe could have a far-reaching impact."

The theme for this year's retreat is "THE POWER OF PLACE: Reframing Old Paradigms in Philanthropy to Build Radical New Systems of Equity Rooted in Place", which will direct attendees to focus specifically on the U.S. Caribbean to gain a better understanding of the welfare needs of the region.

The executives will be exposed to the unique realities of the U.S. Caribbean in hopes that this will translate into systemic social impact and equitable outcomes for marginalized communities.

"The 3-day retreat will offer national and international funders the opportunity to learn about the inherent challenges and assets of the territory's social and economic landscape," the foundation said in a press statement.

The retreat will also explore and challenge philanthropy's current paradigm, which often serves as a "funding gatekeeper" that prevents the equitable flow of resources to those closest to the ground.

According to the foundation, "Over the course of several days, St. Croix Foundation will lead its local nonprofit partners and foundation guests in a focused conversation around the impact of community-rooted collaboration to leverage scarce resources before, during and after a crisis for the most vulnerable among us; the vital role of place-based philanthropies to support and drive sustained social change; and the need for the field of philanthropy itself to evolve in order to effectively meet today's needs."

St. Croix Foundation first launched its Philanthropy Retreat in 2017, one year after conducting a donor study that revealed some striking data about St. Croix's philanthropic landscape.

One finding was that the majority of the donors interviewed were more inclined to provide "charitable" gifts to nonprofits (often below \$10,000) as opposed to giving in ways that would stabilize and advance organizations' missions and programmatic agendas.

The study also showed that a number of deep-pocketed donors, while making transformational gifts as high as millions-of-dollars to stateside nonprofits, were not engaged in that level of giving locally.

According to the foundation, compounding the issue is the fact that most national funders have historically not recognized the U.S. Caribbean as a philanthropic priority, deeming the USVI territory, in particular, to be either international or irrelevant because of its small

population and political status.

“All of these patterns have ultimately had a significant impact on the operational stability of nonprofits, many of which are serving a community with expanding needs and fewer philanthropic resources, forcing many to be overly dependent on government funding to survive,” it said.

In response to the study's findings, the foundation launched their "Nonprofit Consortium" in 2016, to convene local nonprofits around a collective agenda of building organizational capacity and collaborating around shared missions and programming for exponential impact.

To date, the national partnerships being nurtured have generated over \$3,000,000 in funding for St. Croix nonprofits, and the foundation has also connected local nonprofits to relevant intellectual brain-trusts and funding networks in targeted sectors including arts, culture, the environment, health, human services, youth, and education.

Two noteworthy partnerships include the HIVE Fund and Global Giving, both of which represent some of the nation's most prominent funders in their respective fields.